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February 2, 1979

Dear Senator Cranston:

I have received your communication of December 15, 1978 containing the inquiry of Mr. Sherwin Harris, your constituent, concerning the Department's response to the Jonestown, Guyana tragedy.

The Department is cognizant of and sympathetic to the plight of the families of the Jonestown victims and has attempted to administer the disposition of the bodies in an orderly and efficient manner. As of January 25, 641 bodies had been positively identified; of this number, 322 had been claimed by the next-of-kin; and 272 bodies remain unidentified. We are continuing to attempt to identify deceased with the assistance of medical and dental records provided by the next-of-kin.

The prices charged by morticians in Dover are a private matter between the next-of-kin and morticians over which the Department has no control. Likewise the arrangements for and shipment of remains are also private matters.

The Department has set up a Guyana Working Group which has contacted or attempted to contact all known next-of-kin and has provided those persons with information on retrieval of remains and possible avenues of financial assistance, e.g. the Social Security Administration or Veterans Administration. This group was initially staffed on a twenty-four hour basis, seven days a week and is now staffed an average of twelve hours a day.

The Honorable
Alan Cranston,
United States Senate.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 2/2/81
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I hope you find this information helpful in responding to your constituent. If you have further questions, please call Mr. Jay Rini at 202-632-3713.

Sincerely,

CRW

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:
Correspondence returned

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